



# Sandringham School

'Everybody can be Somebody'

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Dear Parents and Carers,

## Re: Home-School expectations around communications

This letter gives you an update on a new communications policy and also offers a reminder about home-school expectations.

Families are incredibly supportive of the school as shown through attendance at various school events and parents' evenings, contributions to fund raising for charity work and Fo\$\$ events, volunteering for school activities such as careers days and providing updates on work that children do outside of school. We are very grateful for all of this work and the positive relationships we have built up over the years.

Like many other schools, we have noticed a rise in the volume of communications to staff, predominately via e-mail, which is having a significant impact on the ability of staff to carry out their core function of educating children. Much of this communication is important however we need to manage this process to ensure it is the best use of professional time.

With this in mind we have reviewed communications with families and a new communications policy has been developed to ensure we are able to offer the level of service you would wish for, whilst at the same time addressing the key issue of teacher workload. A copy of this policy is attached with this letter for your reference. We will endeavour to respond to communications as swiftly and positively as possible, but please remember teaching staff are rarely free during the day due to teaching commitments. If you need to communicate with teaching staff, they will aim to respond to you within three working days.

We encourage good behaviour at all times and have in place pastoral systems to help young people get on with each other and enjoy their learning. The vast majority of our parents/carers realise that any sanction issued due to poor behaviour is always the result of a considered approach and reference to the behaviour code. There are a few parents, however, who do not fully understand this and can be rude and aggressive towards staff when their child has misbehaved. This aggression comes in the form of both verbal and written means; either in person, on the phone or more frequently, via e-mail. It is sometimes personal in nature, very upsetting for staff and again can affect their ability to carry out core education.



We have a Home School Partnership which outlines what is expected from school, parents and students. The Governing Body have recently reviewed the school's Behaviour Management Policy and a new version has been sent to all parents. This includes section 3.5 which gives guidance on expectations for acceptable behaviour from parents/carers and I would be grateful if you could take time to familiarise yourself with this.

Thank you in advance for your understanding and in helping staff to deliver the highest-quality service to you possible.

Yours sincerely



**Alan Gray**  
Headteacher



Artsmark  
Platinum Award  
Awarded by Arts  
Council England





# Communications Policy

Last Reviewed: February 2019

Next Review: February 2020



## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is very important to us that we work closely in partnership with parents and carers, and communication between home and school is key. We recognise however that it can often be difficult communicating with teachers because they have a very full timetable; and we recognise that parents and carers also have very busy lives. Modern communication methods can mean more efficient sharing of information, though this needs to be structured to ensure that it is manageable for staff whose primary responsibility is to teach young people.

## 2. CONTACTING THE SCHOOL

### 2.1 Student planner

Communication by email or student planner are the preferred method:

- Notes in student planners are the best way to get a message to a teacher promptly and should be used for the majority of everyday communication;
- The student is responsible for showing the note to the correct teacher. This is the best way to ask them to contact you if you require a more detailed conversation.

Teachers want to respond to parental queries at the earliest opportunity and will do their best to do so, however, the majority of teachers' time is taken up teaching and preparing for lessons. Teachers' responsibilities extend beyond the classroom, and they may be unable to respond to you on the day a query is made. We have also agreed with staff that there is no expectation to respond to queries during their personal/family time.

### 2.2 Telephone

Please use the main reception number to leave a message for a teacher to contact you:

- Reception staff will relay messages to teachers as soon as possible.
- If a call is urgent, please inform the receptionist who will attempt to find a senior member of staff to speak to you.
- We will aim to respond to you within three working days, if not the same day.
- Please note lessons will never be interrupted for teachers to take calls.

### 2.3 Email

Please use the general admin email [admin@sandringham.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@sandringham.herts.sch.uk) if you need to contact staff. Our admin team will be able to direct your query to the correct teacher or leader.

- Teachers are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day and the school does not expect work email to be checked during a teacher's personal time.
- We aim to respond to you as soon as possible and within three working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply.
- Teachers on occasion may find it easier to email you regarding your child using the contact details we have on file. It is acceptable to continue these conversations directly with the member of staff once they have contacted you, but any subsequent new question or issue should be raised through the [admin@sandringham](mailto:admin@sandringham) address so that it can be tracked and routed accordingly.

## 3. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Our commitment to communicating with you is documented in our **Home School Partnership**. This clearly lays down expectations of students, parents and the school in collaborating to educate young people in the best way possible.

### 3.1 Meetings

The day-to-day care, welfare and safety of your child is managed by the person who is placed closest to them. In the first instance, please approach the following members of staff who are responsible for your child in the following order:

- Form Tutor or Classroom Teacher (if query is relevant to a specific subject)
- Performance Director or Director of Learning (if query is relevant to a specific subject)
- Assistant Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Headteacher

Meetings **should always be pre-arranged** with members of staff.

- We recognise that sometimes you receive news that may cause upset. It is not appropriate to come to school expecting to speak to a particular member of staff without an appointment. Appointments can be made via the school receptionist and a pre-arranged meeting will allow us to have the right information to hand and to meet with you at a time that both suits you and fits with that teacher's timetable and other fixed commitments.
- If you urgently need to see someone, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, please phone ahead and the reception staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see you.
- For non-urgent meetings we will aim to meet with you within five working days. The school will determine the level of urgency at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

### 3.2 Contacting you

Our preferred method of contacting you is via email. Currently we use the ParentMail system though this will be transitioning to our main system Bromcom during 2019.

We also remind you that you have access to My Child At School and Show My Homework (years 7-11) that will give you current information on attendance, rewards and consequences, reports and homework that your child has been set.

For years 7-11, parents evenings are also booked via My Child At School.

Sports teams and fixtures are all managed through the Sandringham Sport website.

All of these services can be accessed via our Parents Portal at <http://parents.sandringhamschool.org/>

If you need support with accessing these systems, please contact [data@sandringham.herts.sch.uk](mailto:data@sandringham.herts.sch.uk)

## 4. SOCIAL MEDIA

### 4.1 School Social Media feeds

We use our social media channels to promote student achievements, subject information and key events at the school. This is for the benefit of parents and students.

Our whole-school Twitter feed is **@SandringhamSch1** and on Facebook is **@sandringhamschool**. Many of our school faculties will have their own Twitter feeds such as **@SandringhamPE** for sports fixtures, **@SandPitTheatre** for shows and events at the theatre, **@SandCareers** for careers information, **@SandringhamDofE** for Duke of Edinburgh updates and many others. Twitter feeds will be prefixed with the word Sand or Sandringham and usually use the school logo to identify them as updates from the school. A list of Twitter feeds that school staff manage is in Appendix A.

Our social media feeds are not monitored for inbound messages. If you have a question about an event or other post on social media, please either email or call the school to be assured of a timely response.

Our social media feeds operate on a 'best efforts' basis by staff whose primary commitment is to the teaching and learning of students. Expectations around frequency and timeliness of updates need to be moderated accordingly, particularly after normal school hours or during holiday periods.

We understand that parents and carers particularly enjoy updates and photographs from school trips. The primary concern of staff needs to be the safety and learning of students on the trip and there may not be time to post about trips in detail. Parents/carers should also be aware that we are often in parts of the country or abroad where there is limited signal, so it may only be possible to update at the end of the day. We will endeavour to update parents on the return time for trips, though we will always encourage students to contact home themselves directly.

#### **4.2 Appropriate use of Social Media**

Our social media sites contain terms and conditions relating to acceptable comments and posts. These terms and conditions are available on the main school Twitter and Facebook pages. We reserve the right to remove posts on these pages that breach the terms and conditions.

We are aware that some parents set up group chats for classes or year groups on WhatsApp, Facebook and other platforms. Whilst we recognise that these can be useful for some parents, these are not endorsed by the school and we will never post official messages on these forums. On occasion, information provided by parents on these forums can be inaccurate or not representative of the school's view. Please rely on official social media channels, the school website (<https://www.sandringham.herts.sch.uk>) or email received directly from the school.

Our teachers and staff have a right to a personal life and to be protected from harassment online. We ask that parents avoid addressing staff members directly via social media and avoid posting inaccurate or defamatory statements about staff or the school on social media platforms.

Contact with the school should be made using telephone, email or in person by appointment. Complaints to the school need to be addressed to the Headteacher in writing. We will not initiate investigation of a formal complaint passed to us via email, since this is not a guaranteed delivery communication mechanism. Our full set of policies are available at <https://www.sandringham.herts.sch.uk/about-us/information-and-policies/>

#### **4.3 No response**

If you have not received a response from the school within three working days, please contact the school by emailing [admin@sandringham.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@sandringham.herts.sch.uk) or telephone the school and we will follow up your enquiry. Communication with parents and carers is important to us, and we will continue to monitor this policy and our approach to improve the process further.

### **Appendix: Sandringham Twitter Feeds**

@SandringhamSch1	Official Sandringham School whole-school feed
@SandHouses	House System of Sandringham School
@SandResearch	The Twitter feed for the Sandringham Research School, using evidence to improve teaching within our network #ResearchSchoolsNetwork
@SandSixth	Sandringham School's Sixth Form, part of the BSV Trust.
@SandGeog	Geography faculty
@SandCompSci	Sandringham School Computer Science Faculty
@SandringhamMths	Maths Faculty
@sandskitrip	Twitter account of Sandringham School Ski Trip
@SandringhamMFL	Sandringham School Modern Foreign Languages
@SandringhamDofE	Sandringham School Duke of Edinburgh Award
@AlbanTSA	Alban Teaching School Alliance
@SandSci	Tweets about Science from the Science Department at Sandringham School
@Sandagogy	The official teaching and learning twitter feed for Sandringham School staff.
@SandringhamDanc	Dance Faculty at Sandringham School
@SandringhamArt	Connecting Sandringham School to the world of Visual Arts! Connect - Inspire - Create...
@DTsandringham	News and links to help understanding of Design and Technology, help with revision, home learning and news on DT faculty
@SandringhamDram	Sandringham School Drama Faculty.
@SandringhamPE	News and updates from Sandringham's PE faculty
@SandringhamMus	Information and news from the music faculty at Sandringham School, St.Albans. Keep up to date with rehearsal and performance news.
@SandPitTheatre	The SandPit Theatre is a professional performance venue with an exciting programme of events, based on the campus of Sandringham School. Box Office: 01727799565
@SandCareers	Updates regarding careers and opportunities for Sandringham Students
@AlbanAcadTrust	Sandringham is one of the member schools of the Alban Academies Trust